

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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SNM-02 TRSE-00 USIA-06 NSC-05 OES-03 OMB-01 AID-05

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FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

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INFO DEA WASHDC

AMEMBASSY CARACAS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BOGOTA 2609

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SNAR CO

SUBJECT: NARCOTICS: OPERATION KITCHEN WRAP-UP REPORT

REF: BOGOTA 12018; 0955 2132 ETC.

INTRODUCTION: FOLLOWING SUMMARIZES OUR ANALYSIS OF THE LESSIONS LEARNED FROM OPERATION KITCHEN, WHICH OFFICIALLY ENDED MARCH 1ST. DEA/BOGOTA IS PREPARING A LONGER ANALYSIS OF THE OPERATION FOR SUBMISSION TO WASHINGTON THIS WEEK.

SUMMARY: DESPITE THE SUCCESSFUL CONCLUSION OF THE OPERATION, IT IS EVIDENT THAT THE F-2 NARCOTICS UNIT LACKS THE MANPOWER (PARTICULARLY OFFICERS) TO SUSTAIN A HIGH LEVEL OF DRUG ENFORCEMENT OPERATIONS OVER EXTENDED PERIODS OF TIME. BETTER COMMUNICATIONS, AIR TRANSPORT AND INTELLIGENCE ANALYSIS ARE KEY TO MORE EFFECTIVE NARCOTICS OPERATIONS IN COLOMBIA, PARTICULARLY THOSE REQUIRING FAST POLICE REACTION. DESPITE OUR BEST COMBINED EFFORTS THE VOLUME OF COCAINE TRAFFIC MOVING OUT OF COLOMBIA CONTINUES TO GROW. THE FINANCIAL RESOURCES OF MAJOR CRIMINAL TRAFFICKING NETWORKS ARE CONSIDERABLY GREATER THAN WE PREVIOUSLY ESTIMATED; THEIR OVERSEAS CONNECTIONS ARE WELL ESTABLISHED AND HARD TO TRACE. ARRESTS AND SEIZURES
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RESULTING DIRECTLY FROM KITCHEN ARE TABULATED BELOW.

1. OVER A PERIOD OF FOUR AND A HALF MONTHS, OPERATIONS KITCHEN RESULTED IN COCAINE HYDROCHLORIDE AND BASE SEIZURES TOTALING 622 KILOGRAMS AND THE DESTRUCTION PRIOR TO SEIZURE OF AN ADDITIONAL 40 KILOGRAMS OF COCAINE. POLICE ARRESTED 102 DEFENDANTS (87 OF THEM IN COLOMBIA), SEIZED \$279,000 IN US CURRENCY, ONE AIRCRAFT AND 14 VEHICLES, AND DESTROYED FOUR (4) CLANDESTINE LABORATORIES. TWO DEFENDANTS WERE CONVICTED IN COLOMBIA AND ARE SERVING 15-YEAR PRISON TERMS. ONE SINGLE SEIZURE TOTALED A RECORD 420 KILOGRAMS OF HIGH-PURITY COCAINE BASE. COCAINE SEIZURES DURING THE 16 WEEKS OF THE OPERATION EXCEEDED THOSE MADE IN THE UNITED STATES IN TWELVE MONTHS OF 1975 BY ALL RPT ALL US ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES. (SEE BOGOTA 2132 FOR MORE DETAILS) THOUGH THE OPERATION HAS OFFICIALLY ENDED AND TDY DEA AGENTS AND INFORMANTS HAVE BEEN WITHDRAWN, THE NATIONAL POLICE (F-2) NARCOTICS UNIT CONTINUES TO FOLLOW-UP ON INTELLIGENCE DEVELOPED DURING THE COURSE OF KITCHEN. IT IS, THEREFORE, LIKELY THAT THERE WILL BE ADDITIONAL ARRESTS AND SEIZURES DIRECTLY ATTRIBUTABLE TO OPERATION KITCHEN.

2. THOUGH WE JUDGE KITCHEN TO BE A SUCCESS, PARTICULARLY IN TERMS OF PRE-IDENTIFIED CLASS ONE AND TWO VIOLATORS ARRESTED, WE ARE DISAPPOINTED THAT THE OPERATION FELL SHORT OF ITS GOALS IN TERMS OF CLANDESTINE LABORATORIES DESTROYED. THIS SEEMS TO US TO BE THE RESULT OF TWO MAJOR FACTORS: THE EXTREME PORTABILITY OF EVEN THE MOST SOPHISTICATED LAB SET UPS AND THE GENERAL SECURITY CRACK-DOWN THROUGHOUT COLOMBIA TRIGGERED BY A PRE-CHRISTMAS 1975 RASH OF KIDNAPPINGS. THOUGH OUR SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS FOR KITCHEN WERE TIGHT, SOME MAJOR TRAFFICKERS ALMOST CERTAINLY BECAME AWARE THAT EXTRAORDINARY EFFORTS WERE BEING APPLIED TO TRACK THEM DOWN. IF THE UNUSUAL NUMBER OF INFORMANTS AND NARCO AGENTS ON THE STREETS DID NOT WARN THE MORE ASTUTE TRAFFICKERS, THE GENERAL SECURITY CRACK-DOWN BEGINNING IN NOVEMBER PROMPTED HIM TO GO TO GROUND, MOVE HIS LABORATORY AND PERHAPS HIS COCAINE STOCK AS WELL.

3. ANOTHER PRINCIPAL LESSON LEARNED FROM KITCHEN IS THAT FOR ALL ITS EXPERIENCE AND EFFECTIVENESS, THE F-2
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NARCO UNIT IS UNDER-MANNED AND UNDER-OFFICERED. THOUGH THE UNIT NUMBERS SOME 130 OFFICERS, AGENTS AND ADMINISTRATIVE PERSONNEL, ONLY ABOUT 80 OFFICERS AND AGENTS WERE AVAILABLE IN BOGOTA OR ON TDY TO OTHER CITIES FOR KITCHEN INVESTIGATIONS. THESE OFFICERS AND AGENTS WERE ROTATED ABOUT ONCE A MONTH OR WHEN IT WAS THOUGHT THEY HAD BEEN COMPROMISED. THE HANDFUL (EIGHT OR NINE) OF SUPERVISORY NARCO OFFICERS AVAILABLE TO THE UNIT WERE TOO FEW TO EXERCISE FULL COMMAND

CONTROL OF ALL FACETS OF THE OPERATION AND STILL CARRY-ON WITH A NORMAL CASE LOAD. WITH NO ADDITIONAL MANPOWER AVAILABLE, NON-KITCHEN CASES WERE SUSPENDED OR TURNED OVER TO DAS FOR INVESTIGATION. IN FACT, SOME CASES DEVELOPED THROUGH KITCHEN WERE SUSPENDED AND ARE ONLY NOW BEING INVESTIGATED AS F-2 RESUMES MORE NORMAL OPERATIONS.

4. AS A DIRECT RESULT OF KITCHEN, THE NATIONAL POLICE REALIZE THEY MUST STRENGTHEN INTELLIGENCE COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS FUNCTIONS. THE F-2 NARCO UNIT LACKS INFORMANT NETS AND SOME TECHNICAL EQUIPMENT IT NEEDS TO SUSTAIN AN EFFECTIVE YEAR-ROUND INTERDICTION OPERATION AGAINST MAJOR TRAFFICKING ORGANIZATIONS. ITS CENTRAL SOURCE FILING SYSTEM IS ALSO INADEQUATE. INTELLIGENCE, WIRE-TAP EQUIPMENT AND INFORMANT BACK-UP FROM THE DEA WAS, THEREFORE, KEY TO THE SUCCESS OF KITCHEN.

5. THE TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO THE F-2 UNIT UNDER KITCHEN WERE, HOWEVER, A MAJOR POSITIVE FACTOR. THE MAJOR WEAKNESSES IDENTIFIED ABOVE ARE NOW FULLY RECOGNIZED BY F-2. THEY ARE, AS A RESULT, NOW PREPARING A PLAN TO EXPAND THE GEOGRAPHIC AND MANPOWER COVERAGE OF THE NARCOTICS UNIT, WHILE STILL KEEPING THE UNIT UNDER CENTRAL CONTROL FROM BOGOTA.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BOGOTA 2609

6. SECURE INTERCITY RADIO COMMUNICATIONS WERE ANOTHER PROBLEM

AREA IDENTIFIED DURING OPERATION KITCHEN. DURING THE OPERATION, MOST COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN BOGOTA F-2 HEAD-QUARTERS AND FIELD UNITS AT CALI AND MEDELLIN WERE VIA COMMERCIAL TELEPHONE. DEA USED VOICE SEQUESTER UNITS FOR ITS TRI-CITY COMMUNICATIONS BOGOTA-MEDELLIN CALI. THE REPEATER UNITS PURCHASED FOR THE OPERATION FROM CCINC FUNDS WERE NOT IN SERVICE UNTIL THE LAST WEEKS OF KITCHEN, AND THESE DID NOT PROVIDE NEEDED INTER-CITY COMMO CAPACITY. THOUGH COMMUNICATIONS DIFFICULTIES DID NOT IN THE LONG HAUL ADVERSELY AFFECT THE OUTCOME OF THE OPERATION, WE WILL WANT TO RESURVEY ALL F-2 LOCAL AND INTER-CITY COMMO REQUIREMENTS TO ASSURE THAT THE NARCOTICS UNIT HAS THE RIGHT COMMUNICATIONS TO SUPPORT CURRENT OPERATIONS, AS WELL AS ITS PLANNED EXPANSION.

7. OF EQUAL IMPORTANCE WILL BE A CLOSE EXAMINATION OF TRANSPORT, AND PARTICULARLY AIR TRANSPORT NEEDS FOR ONGOING NARCOTICS INTERDICTION WORK IN COLOMBIA. AT SEVERAL POINTS DURING OPERATION KITCHEN, HARD INFORMATION WAS DEVELOPED ON TRAFFICKING ORGANIZATIONS CENTERED IN ISOLATED AREAS OF COLOMBIA. BECAUSE F-2 COULD NOT SUPPLY ITS OWN AIR TRANSPORT, WE LOST VALUABLE TIME IN CHARTERING AIRCRAFT OR OBTAINING RESERVATIONS AND TICKETS FOR COMMERCIAL FLIGHTS. IN ONE CASE, INVESTIGATION WAS DROPPED WHEN CHARTER PILOTS REFUSED TO FLY INTO AN ISOLATED, UNAPPROVED AIRSTRIP NEAR THE ECUADORIAN FRONTIER. TIME AND TIME AGAIN DURING KITCHEN, F-2 AND DEA FOUND THAT TRAFFICKERS WERE ABLE TO REACT AND MOVE FASTER THAN THEY WERE ABLE TO MOVE ON OR REACT TO HARD INTELLIGENCE.

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8. TECHNICAL PROBLEMS ASIDE, PROBABLY THE MOST IMPORTANT LESSON TO COME OUT OF KITCHEN HAS BEEN THE COLLECTIVE US-GOC REALIZATION THAT WE HAVE BEEN UNDERESTIMATING THE VOLUME OF ILLEGAL COCAINE MOVING OUT OF COLOMBIA ONTO THE WORLD MARKET. THOUGH OUR REVISED ESTIMATES ARE TENTATIVE AT BEST, IT NOW APPEARS THAT MONTHLY COCAINE HYDROCHLORIDE SHIPMENTS FROM COLOMBIA ARE AS HIGH AS 600 TO 700 KILOGRAMS, NOT THE 400 TO 500 KILOGRAMS WE HAD EARLIER REPORTED. EVIDENCE FOR THIS NEW, ENLARGED TRAFFICKING ESTIMATE RESTS PARTLY UPON THE SEIZURE OF ONE SINGLE SHIPMENT TOTALING 420 KILOS OF 90 PERCENT PLUS COCAINE BASE, AND ONE NEAR MISS INVOLVING AN ADDITIONAL 95 KILO SHIPMENT OF BASE, ALSO ENTERING COLOMBIA FROM ECUADOR. MORE IMPORTANT, HOWEVER, IS INTELLIGENCE OBTAINED FROM F-2 WIRETAPS, WHICH INDICATES THAT THE LARGER COLOMBIAN-BASED TRAFFICKING NETWORKS ARE FREQUENTLY DEALING IN 50-100 KILO LOTS FOR BUYERS IN THE US.

9. EQUALLY IMPORTANT HAS BEEN THE DEVELOPMENT OF NEW

INTELLIGENCE ON THE HIGH FINANCIAL RESOURCES AND EXCELLENT INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL CONNECTIONS AVAILABLE TO MAJOR COLOMBIAN TRAFFICKING ORGANIZATIONS. CONFIDENTIAL INFORMANTS WORKING OPERATION KITCHEN WERE ABLE TO TRACE THROUGH THE OPERATIONS OF ONE TRAFFICKING GANG THE MOVEMENT OF COCAINE PASTE FROM ITS SOURCE IN PERU, THROUGH PROCESSING IN COLOMBIA, TO MARKET IN THE U.S. INFORMATION THROUGH COURT-APPROVED F-2 WIRETAPS INDICATED NOT ONLY THE COMPLEXITY OF INTERNATIONAL TRAFFICKER OPERATIONS, BUT ALSO THAT THE SEIZURE BY DEA OF (IN ONE CASE) 92,000 DOLLARS WAS CONSIDERED BY ONE GANG A MINOR LOSS, AN ACCEPTABLE COST OF DOING BUSINESS. ANOTHER INVESTIGATION STILL UNDERWAY--INDICATED THAT TRAFFICKERS USING THE PORT OF TURBO HAD SET UP A REGULAR MULTI-THOUSAND DOLLAR SYSTEM OF "TARIFF" PAYMENTS TO CORRUPT GOC CUSTOMS OFFICIALS.

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10. FINALLY, THE BOTTOM-LINE EXPERIENCE DEVELOPED FROM OPERATION KITCHEN UNDERLINES THE TIMELINESS OF THE GOC'S OWN CURRENT PLANNING TO REORGANIZE ITSELF FOR A MAJOR EFFORT AGAINST THE LARGE CRIMINAL GROUPS THAT CONTROL THE BULK OF THE COCAINE TRAFFIC EMANATING FROM COLOMBIA. THROUGH THE INDIVIDUAL GOC NARCOTICS UNITS IN F-2, DAS AND THE ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE ARE MADE UP OF DEDICATED, EXPERT POLICE OFFICERS, THESE UNITS ARE INDIVIDUALLY AND COLLECTIVELY LACKING IN MANPOWER AND EQUIPMENT NEEDED TO DO THE JOB. MORE IMPORTANTLY, THEIR ACTIVITIES ARE NOW ONLY LOOSELY COORDINATED THROUGH THE OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL WHICH CAN OFFER LEGAL ADVICE, BUT NO OTHER MATERIAL SUPPORT OR COMMAND CONTROL (BOGOTA 1176). IN FACT THE SEVERAL OFFICIAL GOC SERVICES WORKING DRUGS ARE HIGHLY COMPETITIVE AND DO NOT AT PRESENT POOL THEIR RESOURCES, EVEN UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE AG. FOR EXAMPLE, WHEN WE FIRST DISCUSSED THE SUBJECT OF KITCHEN WITH THE ATTORNEY GENERAL LAST YEAR, WE SUGGESTED THAT OPERATION BE JOINTLY CARRIED OUT BY ALL THREE NARCO UNITS (DAS, F-2, CUSTOMS) UNDER SUPERVISION OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL. THE ATTORNEY GENERAL TURNED DOWN THIS IDEA AS BEING UNWORKABLE, AN ADMISSION THAT HE LACKED AUTHORITY TO EFFECTIVELY COORDINATE THE OPERATIONS OF THE SEVERAL DRUG UNITS, AND SUGGESTED F-2 AS THE SOLE OPERATIONAL AGENCY FOR KITCHEN. THANKS IN PART TO THE EXPERIENCE OF KITCHEN, THE GOC HAS NOW RECOGNIZED THE NEED FOR CLOSER CENTRAL COORDINATION OF ITS OVERALL DRUG CONTROL EFFORT, HAS ANALYZED THE SITUATION, AND IS PLANNING CORRECTIVE ACTION.

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